

# Indian Vengeance

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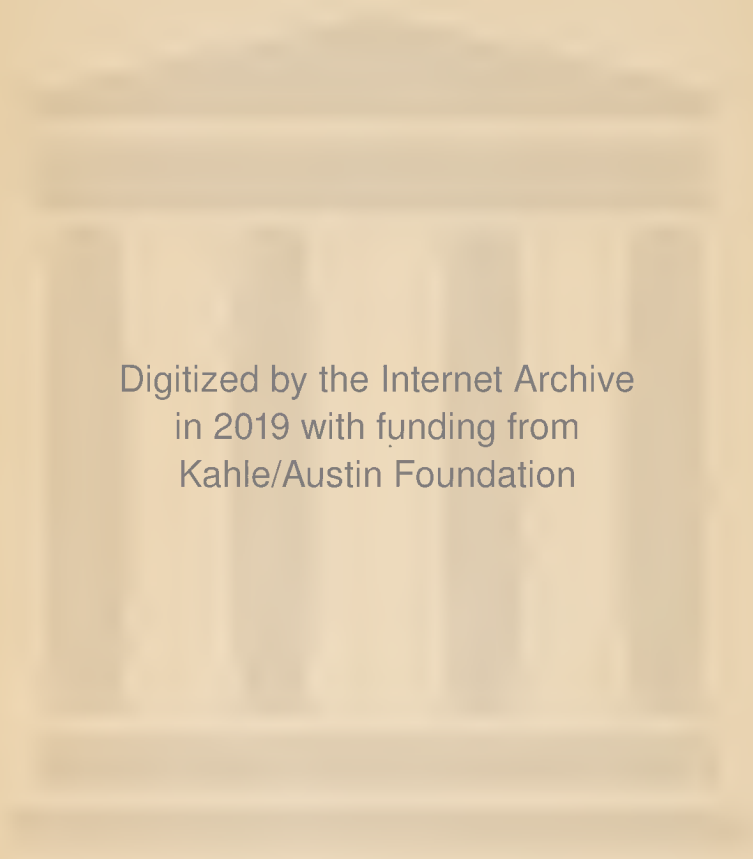


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THE CHILKAT KLOOTCH

# Indian Vengeance

By

Livingston French Jones



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# Indian Vengeance

## CHAPTER I

“GISSAOOSH has brought us great shame,” said Konawok, the chief of the runaway wife’s tribe, as he addressed his people, “and we must make his people pay heavily for it. Five days from this enough of us must proceed to Wrangell and force our claim. We must have enough strong men of our tribe to fill three large canoes, and when five suns have come and gone we will go and bring back Kosteén, the wild wife, and the pay for our disgrace.

“My sons, make ready, and arm yourselves well, for Wrangell blood may have to flow before we get what we shall demand.”

The speaker was a tall, swarthy Indian with determination depicted upon his countenance.

The people whom he addressed were members of his own tribe, and they listened to their chief’s remarks with a gravity becoming the occasion.

Gissaoosh, a Wrangell brave, while visiting Sitka, fell in love with Kosteén, the wife of

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another. She very unwisely reciprocated his attentions, and finally eloped with him.

The semi-barbarous inhabitants were greatly excited over the affair, and it furnished them a topic for gossip for many days.

The day after the elopement, measures for capturing the offending parties were excitedly discussed by the tribe of Kosteén. Then it was that Konawok, their chief, delivered the words already recorded. A hearty assent was given to the remarks of the chief. More than enough volunteered their services.

It was not deemed wise to put chase to the eloping ones, as there were so many different water-courses, if they pursued them, they might not strike the right one. Besides, the elopers had many hours the start of them.

It was argued that as the man who had seduced the woman was from Wrangell, in due time he would convey his prize to that burg. There the tribe of Konawok could wait upon the tribe of Gissaoosh, the offender, recover the woman and demand such pay of blankets as would be considered enough to cover such great shame as had been given them.

To a native an act involving shame is worse than an act involving mere injury. There is

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nothing that so completely breaks him up as a sick tumtum (sense of shame). He loses appetite and sleep, and is very mopish until he has been adequately compensated for his shame. He is very sensitive and easily offended too. To be laughed at, to have any gift declined, not to eat heartily of the food he sets before you, no matter how vile it may be to your taste and pungent to your nose, to fail to give him five or ten times more than he has given you, to slight him in any way, are causes of shame. The biggest shame you can give him is to call him a witch.

Then there is tribal shame or offenses resented by the entire tribe. Such was the offense of Gissaoosh. A member of the tribe had been injured and their custom grossly violated. This was their cause, therefore as a tribe they would see to it that reparation was had. And as the tribe of Gissaoosh would naturally take up his defense, Konawok would look to them for that reparation.

The intervening days till the chief and his volunteers would start on their mission were spent mostly in collecting and putting in good shape their war implements. In those days these consisted of knives, clubs, spears, axes

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and some rifles. Their canoes were staunch little ships dug out of one solid tree, each capable of carrying fifteen men and their belongings.

Most of the people of the village were deeply interested in the war preparations of Konawok and the men of his little navy. All wanted a voice, if not a hand, in the matter. Talk is so cheap that most any one is ready to volunteer the use of his tongue if not his hand.

The members of other tribes than Konawok's were secretly glad to see the proud Kokwontons (the name of his tribe, and the most powerful and haughty one of the community) laboring under their humiliation. Among themselves they chuckled over the affair and took a large slice of satisfaction out of it.

Jealousy is one of the prominent traits of these natives. Inferior tribes, therefore, were not sorry when their stronger neighbors were annoyed and humiliated.

"H'm! they put all the blame," said one, "on Gissaoosh. What about their own deceitful sly fox, Kosteen? See how she has tricked Hochaga, her husband? They'd better give *her* some of the credit of the shameful affair."

"Indeed they had," replied another. "Don't I know her? I'm sure she required no great

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amount of coaxing to run away as she did. She's all too fond of the men, I assure you. Her share, I'll warrant, is fully one-half. And who's to pay for Hochaga's injury? Konawok and his kin are not worrying much about that, are they? But mark me, somebody will have to pay; for no Thlinget is injured for nothing. I fancy that Hochaga's people will have a reckoning with his wily wife's tribe. And then it will be Konawok's brood's turn to squeal."



## CHAPTER II

HOCHAGA, the husband of Kosteén, showed a stolid indifference to his wife's elopement. His pride would not allow him to betray the slightest concern for her. It would be her tribe's business to rectify his wrong. He and his tribe would have to be paid heavily for the insult and shame they were obliged to endure through Kosteén's folly. This was one reason why Kosteén's people expected to levy a heavy fine on the Wrangellites for Gissaoosh's offense. The blankets and money they obtained at Wrangell would be used to heal the sore in Hochaga and his people's hearts.

Gissaoosh and Kosteén knew very well what trouble would brew over their elopement. But their hasty passion for each other did not stop for consequences.

It is a trait of this people to gratify present desires regardless of consequences. They live nearly altogether for the present and let the future take care of itself. So in many instances they sacrifice the future to the time being. Gissaoosh and Kosteén willingly did this.

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In order not to be seen they traveled by night. The second day of their elopement, feelings of remorse seized Kosteën. But she smothered her feelings, as she did not wish Gissaoosh to detect anything like repentance of her folly.

"Gissaoosh, when will we reach Wrangell?" she asked. "I fear we are pursued. If so, and we're caught, it will go hard with us."

"If the weather favors us," he answered, "three nights from this we'll see her lights. But don't fear, Kosteën. We're well in the lead of any pursuers. Besides, they don't know what course we've taken."

"What is that skirting yonder shore?" inquired Kosteën, pointing to the opposite side of the channel.

Gissaoosh looked and saw a canoe moving rapidly along the opposite shore.

"Put out the fire!" he commanded.

Kosteën grabbed a pail of water near by and with it instantly extinguished the camp fire.

They breathlessly watched the canoe in the distance. They were well hidden from the view of any passing by, yet ready to flee back into the dense wood had the canoe headed in their direc-

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tion. They watched the passing canoe until it was out of sight.

The waterways of southeastern Alaska are a dream. Their scenic features are probably unexcelled anywhere in the world. Her long deep straits and channels, sometimes wide and sometimes narrow, are like vast mirrors at times, reflecting the stately, snowcapped mountains which rise like gigantic sentinels along their winding shores. Then again they are like vast boiling caldrons when lashed into fury by the storms. These, and her charming bays, are studded with beautiful islands clothed with evergreen. Here and there the awe-inspiring glaciers, vast and mighty inclines of solid ice, carved and turreted by the great Architect, present their fascinating ponderosity. Innumerable waterfalls, like serpentine snowy ribbons, trail themselves down the green-carpeted mountain sides, leaping like frisky lambs from ledge to ledge. Varied indeed is the scenery, giving the traveler new visions of beauty on every turn.

It was along one of these charming highways that the much-dreaded canoe, first sighted by Kosteel, kept on its course.

When relieved of fear Gissaoosh said: "If

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these clouds break, and I think they will, for I feel the breath of the north wind, we'll have the moon to smile on us tonight; and with the tide and moon favoring us, we'll make a long stretch toward Wrangell, our refuge. Then if your people come to tear you away from me there'll be trouble. Kosteel, you look pale for one of our color. Does your heart sicken at what I have suggested? or do you repent of your action for having run away with me?"

"No, Gissaoosh, I do not repent; for my passion for you has not burned out so soon. But I pale at the thought of what may result from my folly with you. You know the ways of our people. What I have done my husband's people will regard as a great shame to them, and they will make trouble, much trouble, for my people. My people will blame you, and they will make much trouble for your people. Why did we think of ourselves only in this matter?"

"A passion such as ours, Kosteel, though born in a day, does not stop to argue such nice points. Those seized with the true, burning passion of love, do not weigh consequences. Two souls so kindled by each other, seek, at all hazards, the companionship of each. Sometimes they pay dearly for it, but then the best things

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of life, you know, always cost the most. However, Kosteén, don't let your mind dwell on that phase of our elopement. We will live and love as though we are the only two in the world."

Kosteén readily fell in with the humor of Gissaoosh, though she realized there is always bitter with the sweet and thorns with the rose.

As the sun dipped toward the horizon, the sombre curtains of the sky parted. Rifts here and there exposed patches of blue and indicated a clear night would follow. The sun set in a majesty which pen nor tongue could never describe. The water for miles glittered in its golden reflection. As the glorious orb was disappearing from their vision, Gissaoosh and Kosteén partook of their frugal evening meal of dried salmon, oil and berries.

There was no table to clear nor dishes to wash after this meal in the primeval forest, and as the twilight stole softly over the land the two boarded their canoe and were soon deftly dipping their paddles into the briny deep, sending their little craft along as though it were gliding through a sea of oil.

Kosteén, as captain, occupied the stern of the yak and Gissaoosh the prow. (It is a common

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custom with this people for the women to steer the canoe.) As they traveled along, their keen eyes pierced the semi-darkness, and their keen ears distinguished every sound, as they were on the alert for the approach of human beings.

Three hours had sped away when they came to a large body of water they were obliged to cross. Although there was an ocean swell on, it was as smooth as a mirror. Nothing daunted, they plunged the prow of their canoe into the broad expanse. It required at least three hours of strong, steady paddling to cross this body of water under favorable circumstances. They had been scarcely an hour out on this open sea when threatening clouds were making up in the south. Gissaoosh was weather prophet enough to see that a storm was brewing such as makes up very quickly over Alaskan waters. But he did not care to retreat and hoped it would not burst upon them before they had reached the opposite shore.

“Kosteen, the weather is threatening,” he said. “These paddles must move swifter if we would make yonder shore before the tempest bursts upon us.”

In less than an hour after these remarks, the wind had freshened and was blowing strongly.



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It increased more and more until they realized they were buffeting a gale. The dark clouds obscured somewhat the light of the moon and the waves gathered in height moment by moment. Still, with heroic courage they pressed on. The rain pelted them unmercifully. It was a struggle and a peril, but they won and felt themselves the stronger for it.

As they came under the shelter of the shore they had so long and arduously pulled for and realized they were safe, Kosteel said: "I'm thankful we're across at last. Another mile and I'd be done for."

"It was a hard contest, Kosteel, and you did your part splendidly. The light in the east bespeaks the approach of day, and we'll now go into camp."

They paddled along the shore until they saw a suitable place to sojourn. Shortly after establishing their camp, they heard a crackling in the bushes. Instinctively Gissaoosh grabbed his rifle. After a moment's investigation, he discovered a big brown bear (hootz, in the native tongue. Seeg is the black bear). He took aim, fired and wounded it in the shoulder. Infuriated at this attack, the animal rushed at his assailant. Gissaoosh fired a second shot,



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this time piercing the ear of the mad creature. The next moment the bear was challenging him with a hand-to-hand conflict. Kosteel, seeing the seriousness of the situation, seized a long, sharp butcher-knife and rushed to participate in the struggle. The bear had already disarmed Gissaoosh of his rifle and had reared again to strike him a blow that would have certainly killed him, when Kosteel stealthily and as quickly as a panther, sprang and plunged the deadly knife completely through the heart of the brute. With an agonized groan, he reeled and fell over dead.

Gissaoosh was as pale as death and, for a moment, gazed with astonished admiration on his companion.

“Kosteel, you’re the greatest of women!” he exclaimed. “You have saved my life. You’re even braver than any of the sons of Yalkth.” (The large imaginary bird of the crow species which the natives regard as the creator of all things.) “Forever shall I love and admire you. If now all the people of Sitka come, they cannot have you back till they have shed the last drop of Wrangell blood; for when I tell my people of your heroic deed, they too will admire you and fight to keep you mine.”

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Kosteen, with becoming modesty, received this warm commendation without reply.

It was a narrow escape for Gissaoosh, but a lucky killing for them. It furnished them a plentiful supply of meat and the fur was very useful to them.

They reached Wrangell a night later than Gissaoosh had predicted on account of the storm.

### CHAPTER III

THE fifth day after Konawok had enjoined his men to prepare to go to Wrangell, all were ready. Only the bravest and stoutest were allowed to enlist in this enterprise. There were thirty-five in all. Much excitement prevailed as they were preparing for their departure. The people gathered to see them off, and did not leave the beach until they had pulled out of sight.

While Konawok and his men were on their way, the arrival of Gissaoosh and Kosteen created a sensation among the Wrangellites. When they heard how the brave woman had dispatched a bear with a knife, they regarded her with great admiration. The tribe of Gissaoosh were proud of such an acquisition to their family. They were not inclined to consider the disgrace attaching to the woman for eloping with another after her wonderful exploit. When told by Gissaoosh that some Kokwontons would probably come and demand Kosteen to be given up to them, they replied that they would fight to keep her.

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The Wrangellites knew that they were weaker than the Sitkans, and in open combat, with any number of them, would be worsted. They must resort to strategy in order to cope with so formidable an enemy.

The leader of the tribe of Gissaoosh, instead of deprecating the action of his tribesman for eloping with another man's wife, palliated and condoned it. In his harangue he exhorted them to be loyal to their brother.

"My children," said the chief, "if any number of the Kokwontons come, we must be cunning enough to outwit them, in order to get the better of them. If few come, we can ignore their demands. We will wait, therefore, and see how many come, if they come at all, before we plan what to do. We must, however, make a goodly lot of hoochinoo (a native whiskey), for if many come this will be our chief means of defeating them. We will pretend to be very hospitable and, when we have them under the spell of our fire-water, we can dispatch them with ease. Their appetite for fire-water is such that they cannot resist it, nor would they think of offering us insult by refusing our hospitality. So they will fall readily into our trap. Have no fears, as we'll more than match them."

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These ignoble suggestions met with a hearty approval from the members of the chief's tribe.

As was anticipated, the Sitkans in due time arrived at Wrangell. As the canoes approached the village, they drew up in friendly array along the beach. Konawok, the chief of the visitors, before any of his people disembarked, addressed the Wrangellites in friendly terms, stating that he and his people had come to make them a friendly visit.

This address was replied to by the chief of Gissaoosh's tribe. It was an address of welcome. These formalities over, the Sitkans disembarked and proceeded with their personal effects to the houses where they were to be entertained.

When the Thlingets of one village go to attend a feast or potlatch at another, their arrival is made very spectacular. The larger the feast, and the more important the giver, the more of pomp and display. The fleet of canoes, decorated with flags and banners, are lined up in front of the village their occupants are visiting, and formal speeches made by their leading men. They are received and welcomed with customary ceremony. Such an event is a gala day for the whole village.

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The Sitkans, pretending they were on a friendly visit to the Wrangellites, observed, on a small scale, such formalities. But the latter were not deceived; they knew very well the purpose of their visit.

It is customary with the natives of this country to beat about the bush before coming to the point. So the Sitkans did not abruptly make known the intent of their visit and at once challenge the Wrangellites as soon as they saw them. It was not until the second day after their arrival that they began to hint the purpose of their visit. The Wrangell people knew very well when the storm began to brew.

It was finally charged that one of their men had come to Sitka and there committed a very serious offense. They were deliberately told how Gissaoosh had inveigled Kosteene, who was the wife of another, into running away with him. Its atrocity was greatly emphasized. Said Konawok with rising energy: "Your man has given us great shame. According to our custom, we demand that you wipe out this shame by paying us five hundred blankets and two hundred dollars, and Kosteene must return with us to her rightful husband."

The Wrangellites hung their heads in mock

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sorrow at this demand and began to parley with their visitors.

“We cannot,” said their spokesman, “feel that Gissaoosh was to blame in this unfortunate affair. Your daughter’s seductive charms and her willing consent to go with Gissaoosh, make her responsible. Besides, she is married, and he is not. She, therefore, is more to blame. So we cannot see how you may justly make such a demand of us as you have.”

“Gissaoosh came to our place,” answered Konawok, “made love to our daughter and induced her to run off with him. Had he not come, she would not have been tempted. So we feel that he has given us great shame. This dishonor must be wiped out by you paying us what we demand.”

The Wrangellites pretended to demur at this, and, after some quiet consultation with one another, their spokesman said: “We concede that you are right. Gissaoosh has brought us great trouble. We are sorry. We will treat you right, our friends. Tomorrow we will go to the river and there enjoy ourselves, and we will make such reparation as we can to you for the dishonor which you have suffered.”

Konawok and his people, not perceiving the



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treachery lurking in this proposition, received it gladly.

That night the Wrangellites laid their plans for entrapping the unwary Sitkans.

The next morning the weather was serene and charming. Very early the people were up and astir. Business of importance demanded their attention. Nothing is more important to the native than feasting, and all enter into it with a zest. For some time they were busy in carrying things to their canoes for the pretended jollification. Not only was a large quantity of hoochinoo put into their canoes, but two or three of their rude stills with which to manufacture more on the grounds. Every one wore a happy countenance, smiled and cracked jokes as though no treachery lurked amongst them. The Wrangellites were consummate actors in hiding completely their feelings and designs. The Sitkans, strange to say, suspected no treachery. They flattered themselves that their superiority had cowed the tribe of Gissaoosh into submission. Little did they realize they were going to their doom. Though, like their race, they were naturally very suspicious and distrustful, yet, so cunning was the acting of their enemies, so accurately did they imitate

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the gracious host, the visitors mistrusted no evil. To show themselves smart enough to entrap the shrewd and haughty Kokwontons, to beat them at their own game, to humiliate them, would redound, the Wrangellites thought, to their glory.

All were happy and merry as they proceeded to the river where they were to spend a festive day. Not a gloomy countenance was to be seen in the entire party. Faces were wreathed in smiles, and laughter in response to witticisms echoed over the still waters. Festive songs, sung to the rhythmic accompaniment of the dip of the paddles, were happy features of the journey. The anticipation of a glorious day lit up every countenance. The Sitkans had, in addition to the prospect of having a grand orgie, visions of blankets and money. Bright indeed with promise was the day for them.

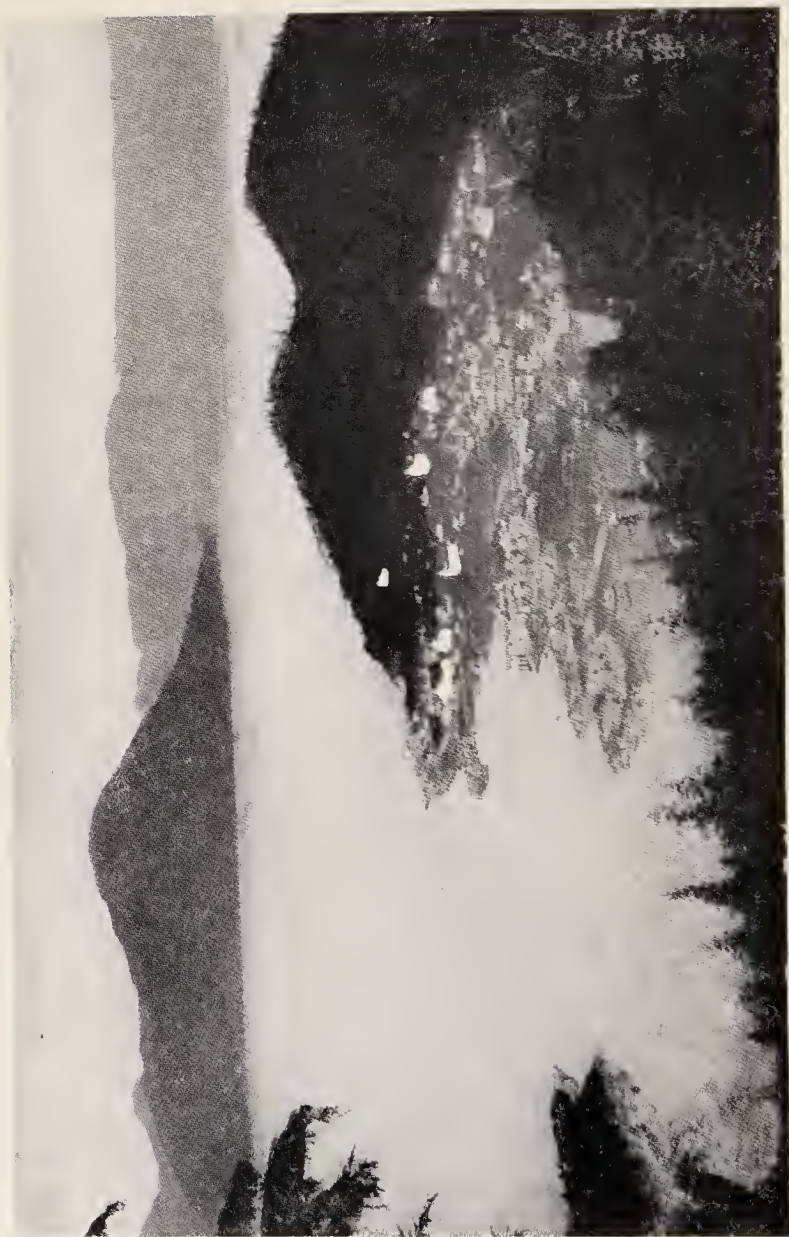
Arrived at the spot where there was to be so much high hilarity, preparations for a joyful day were begun. The strong fire-water was soon passed to the visitors and the whiskey-stills were set in motion. The product of these stills is one of the vilest potations known to man. Potatoes and black molasses are the principal ingredients. The concoction resulting

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from this brew maddens and then paralyzes the drinker.

The Wrangellites, knowing the game, drank sparingly of the beverage — just enough to nerve them to the bloody deed they had in contemplation. The visitors, under the guise of hospitality, were urged to drink heavily. Once their appetites were whetted, they needed no urging to show their appreciation as guests. Liquor was their *summum bonum*. They drank so heavily and constantly that the first effect of the brew, to craze, was scarcely reached when the drinkers passed into the paralyzing stage. Here and there they lay as senseless logs. This was the moment for the treacherous Wrangellites. They arose and put them to the knife, butchering them to the last man. It was a frightful slaughter, some of them being literally cut to pieces. The scene can better be imagined than described.





VIEW OF WRANGELL, ALASKA

## CHAPTER IV

WHEN the news of the massacre reached Sitka, the people of that village were horrified. Great lamentation and weeping went up from the homes of the Kokwontons. They were wild with excitement and greatly exercised as to the speediest and most summary way in which they could avenge their slain. Various measures were discussed, but it was very wisely determined they would do nothing at present; that they would hide their feeling in the matter, pretend they were indifferent and had accepted the butchery as a matter of course.

Months passed away and even years, yet no notice was taken of the massacre, so far as seeking revenge was concerned. But the boys of the Kokwontons budding into manhood were, during those months of silence, told over and over of the dastardly treachery of the Wrangellites and of their duty to avenge the blood of their fathers.

One stalwart youth especially was impressed with what a duty he owed his people to avenge the killing of their fathers. He vowed that he

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would exercise and exercise until he developed himself into a veritable Hercules and then he would copiously shed the blood of Wrangellites. So in the winter Sloonooah, when the thermometer dropped to zero and the snow covered the ground at a depth of three or four feet, would bare his back and, with axe on his shoulder, trudge off into the forest, cut back loads of wood and pack it through the snow to his home. It was a difficult task, and one which required great fortitude. But the youth was determined to make himself strong and hardy that he might fight valiantly for his people.

A common toughening process was to strip on a cold winter day and plunge naked into the ice-cold water of the bay. Then, after floundering around in the water for some minutes, he would come out and wallow naked in the snow. Then, after wallowing in the snow, he would switch his naked body until it intensely glowed and burned. Sloonooah subjected himself to this severe treatment frequently until his body became almost impervious to cold.

He would go on long and difficult hunts for the bear, climbing the rugged mountains until the sinews of his legs became as iron; and pack



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heavy quarters of the bear until his back would bear incredible loads.

To develop courage and fearlessness, he would attack the savage cinnamon bear under most unfavorable circumstances to himself. In short, he practiced every manner of hardy exercise until he was powerfully developed.

While he was thus preparing himself to wreak vengeance on the Wrangellites, they were flattering themselves that the Sitkans did not intend to avenge the murder of their people.

Thus encouraged, one family of the Wrangellites made bold to go to Sitka to trade and bring back the much-coveted crab-apples which grew there. They felt somewhat uncertain about what kind of treatment they would meet with at the hands of the Sitkans; still they ventured. Their fears were entirely dispelled when, on their arrival, they met with kind treatment. They were paid good prices for what they had to sell, and were asked low prices for what they wished to buy. They were, also, treated very hospitably so long as they remained at Sitka.

This was all done as a blind to make them believe that the Kokwontons held no grievance against their people, and have them go back

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home and make a favorable report concerning the friendly relations of their northern neighbors. The deceit was a complete success, as the visiting family really thought that the people of Sitka harbored no ill-will toward their people.

So, when they returned home, they gave a most favorable report of their visit; of the good prices paid for their wares; of the cheap prices asked for what they wanted, and of the kindness of the people.

Owing to these very favorable reports, two canoe loads of Wrangellites went to Sitka to sell and to purchase. The Sitkans saw from this that the bait thrown out the previous summer had not been thrown in vain. Still they would not strike their blow of vengeance on these. There were too few of them to offset the number they had lost in the Wrangell massacre. So they would wait patiently their time when they could kill and pay back with interest the Wrangellites for their treachery.

These visitors, or traders, were treated with the same kindness and consideration as were the family the previous summer. Good prices were paid for what they had to sell, and what they desired to buy was sold to them very

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cheaply. Gifts, too, were bestowed upon them, and they were feasted and royally treated. Not the slightest allusion or reference (so careful were the Kokwontons to hide their feelings) was made to the massacre by any of them. The burning feeling for revenge in their bosoms was most adroitly smothered. The traders were very cunningly given the impression that they held no resentment against their people whatever.

When they returned home they gave glowing reports of their visit. When they showed the purchases which they had gotten so cheaply, the money they had received from their sales and their gifts, the cupidity of the rest of the population was aroused, and many more resolved that they would try it the next summer.

All were, indeed, surprised at the conduct of the Sitkans, whom they naturally supposed would hate them for the murdering of their people. The only reason they could assign for such unexpected treatment was that the massacre was so summary and startling that the Sitkans were subdued with fear; and their kind treatment to the visiting people was one of conciliation and propitiation to obtain the good will of so dangerous a people.

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This construction of the conduct of the Sitkans served to embolden the Wrangellites to try their fortune with their northern neighbors on a larger scale. So the following summer a company of them numbering forty-five made their way to Sitka to barter and enrich themselves. They flattered themselves that they had found easy game. They started out jubilantly and each time they made camp, as they were obliged to do, they talked and boasted how they would return loaded with plunder such as they coveted.

On their arrival at Sitka, they were most cordially welcomed. This, strange to say, instead of arousing their suspicions, won their confidence. We would naturally suppose that, since they had played the game of treachery in a similar way to entrap the Sitkans, they would have been suspicious of such flattering treatment.

But when will man learn that he is generally paid back in his own coin? that the evil chickens he hatches will some day come home to roost?

So these people of Wrangell deluded themselves with the idea that they would escape any such treatment as they had meted out to the Sitkans. "With what measure ye meet, it

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shall be meted unto you," did not apply to them, of course. So we all reason. But let Haman look out when he is erecting a gallows for Mordecai that he does not get his own neck stretched on it.

The Sitkans threw their homes open to the Wrangellites and showed them every hospitality they would a favored guest.

They proposed to the visitors that before any trading was done a grand dance be given in their honor. This honor was cheerfully accepted by the unsuspecting Wrangellites. They could not refuse without giving offense. This they scrupulously avoided as they desired to keep on good terms with the people for the commercial advantage they derived from it, as well as not to arouse them to retaliate for past injuries.

But it was the Sitkans' hour for revenge, and the plot for the utter destruction of the Wrangellites was thickening every moment. The plans for their summary execution had been carefully laid.

A large communal house, with a large fire-pit in the center and an aperture in the top for the egress of the smoke, was selected for the dance. To enter one of these houses, you

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ascended a flight of stairs on the outside and descended a flight on the inside. It consists of one large room, having a ledge about four feet high and six feet wide around the entire room. This ledge is used as a dormitory and to hold the belongings of those living in the house. From six to a dozen families occupy this room. There is little or no privacy maintained in one of these lodges. There is some pretension to it by some who have a sense of modesty by hanging up a curtain or two of drilling to partition themselves off from others for sleeping and dressing purposes. But it affords little protection from the gaze of any and none from the hearing. The large, square depression in the center of the room is ordinarily used for cooking, and is a favorite loafing place beside the big log fire. But on festive occasions the space is needed for the dancers. First the members of one tribe dance and then members of the other. They dance to see who can excel. They dress for the occasion in private houses, and, when all are ready, they march to the dance-house at the beat of the native drum, a rude instrument made of deerskin stretched over a round hoop about four inches deep. It



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is beat as we beat the bass drum. The performers are dressed in as fantastic a manner as they can contrive, each according to his own taste, and no two precisely alike. Some of their costumes are very costly. Their headgear is generally peculiar and grotesque. Their faces are hideously painted. Men, women and children dance together in the same set. The dancing does not consist in whirling about the room, male and female locked in each other's embrace, as we find in civilized, polite society.

The dancers stand packed close together in pell-mell style, and the feet are not moved. The dancing consists of rhythmic motions of the arms, head and body, accompanied with a weird chanting and beating of the drum. These motions are not very unlike a drill in calisthenics. But the masqued faces and grotesque costumes give the dance more the appearance of a grand masquerade than anything else with which we may compare it. Here and there some genius has a headgear filled with loose particles of eagle's down; and, jerking his head violently from time to time, fills the air like a snowstorm. Notwithstanding the many ludicrous objects and actions one sees in these dances, hilarity



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and merriment are kept down; as they are regarded as serious business.

This, then, was the sort of pastime these Wrangellites were invited to participate in for the advantage of the Sitkans.





HAK-WAN-TON, INDIANS' PATLATCH, SITKA, ALASKA

## CHAPTER V

THE evening set for the dance was very propitious. The visiting tribe was given the place of honor; that is, to dance first. While they were out preparing for the dance, which consisted in painting their faces and adjusting their costumes, the Sitkans, as cautiously as possible, were preparing to fall upon them when in the midst of the dance and put the last one to the knife. The Wrangellites being wholly unarmed and hampered in their dancing accoutrements were entirely at their mercy. The avengers purposed to show no mercy, but to dispatch the last one of them if possible. They had an old score to settle which for months had been bearing interest. Leniency in such affairs was no part of their code. They were thirsting for blood, and they did not propose to use gentle hands in causing it to flow.

Sloonooahah, the young warrior who had so persistently trained himself for the occasion, was the leading spirit in the massacre. He had procured somewhere a big broadsword and sharpened it until it was as keen as a razor.

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He made a most deadly weapon of it. It was the worst weapon of death and destruction on this lamentable occasion. The men selected to do the execution were armed with sharp knives for the purpose and, the most of them, concealed in waiting on the outside of the dance-house, ready to rush in at a given signal. Two men were stationed on the roof near the aperture where they could watch the movements in the room below and, at the most propitious moment, give the sign to those in waiting outside to rush in and join the executioners inside. Those inside had concealed their implements of death under their blankets and dress. Women were to take a hand in the massacre to make it all the more inglorious for the Wrangellites. Nothing was left undone to make their punishment as dire as possible.

All preparations for the dance having been made, the unsuspecting visitors, accoutred in their dancing paraphernalia, came trooping in at the weird and uncanny beat of the drum. Their spirits were high and full of mirth. During their preparations, they indulged in much laughter and many jokes; and now on their way to the house of merriment they were no less happy. It was their most popular amusement,

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and one that raised them to a high pitch of excitement and drove all dull care away. Joyfully they took their station on one side in the pit of the room. There was not a look nor a movement on the part of the Sitkans to betray there was any mischief in the air. In cunning, they were consummate artists.

At the beating of the drum and the rising of the chant, the dancers began their rhythmic motions. All went well until a bloodcurdling war whoop, which struck terror to every soul, was sounded from the roof. At this signal, the executioners on the outside rushed in, letting out yells that caused the stoutest hearts to quail. The victims, so utterly taken by surprise, unarmed, hampered and struck with terror, were practically paralyzed for a spell. Then began a desperate struggle for their lives. In the pandemonium which prevailed, they fell, one after another, nor did it take long, till the last Wrangellite had been dispatched. It was a fearful slaughter, and the scene then and there beggars all description. The author must throw the reader on his imagination to complete the horrid scene.

At last the Sitkans had avenged the foul massacre of their fathers. The haughty Kok-



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wontons were now satisfied. The old black score against Wrangell was now cancelled. No longer would they go about with their heads hung in sorrow and in shame.

These massacres established a bitter and lasting animosity between the two villages which, in measure, exists to this day. Since the last massacre more than one adventurous Sitkan has mysteriously disappeared, supposedly, at least, the victim of foul play at the hand of some Wrangellite; and more than one adventurous Wrangellite has likewise disappeared, a victim of foul play at the hand of some Sitkan. To this day members of the belligerent tribes are cautious how they visit each other's territory.

But this is not all: other tragedies followed as a consequence of the elopement of Gissaoosh and Kosteén. As Kosteén was now blamed for all of these frightful disasters, she had to be reckoned with.

When the people of Wrangell learned of the tragic death of their people at the hands of the Sitkans, it was their turn to weep and lament. There was mourning in every household. But they felt themselves powerless to avenge the murder of their people. They also felt that the







GENERAL VIEW OF SITKA, ALASKA

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Sitkan massacre was a retaliation of their murder of the Sitkans and, in a sense, deserved.

Still, there was Kosteel, who, they agreed, was the cause of all this mischief; should not something be done with her?

Gissaoosh knew that trouble was brewing for Kosteel, and became alarmed for her safety. He informed her that she was in danger of being brutally killed by his people. They were furious over the slaughter of their people and were anxious to shed some one's blood in revenge. They had turned their eyes toward her and would surely dispose of her if she did not get out of their way.

When she was told this she fully realized her danger and was fearful for her life.

"Kosteel," said Gissaoosh, "we must get into a canoe and go away to save your life. My people are furious and you are not safe here in this place. We must leave at once — not later than tonight."

"But where shall we go?" inquired Kosteel.

"Out into the wild somewhere — anywhere. It matters not where so we can keep from your enemies," he replied. "We will go where none can ever find us and remain until they are sorry that they have driven Gissaoosh away. And

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when their anger has passed away and they long to see the face of Gissaoosh, then we may return and you will be in no danger from my people, as they will see how I love you."

Marriages are often made among the Thlingets with the element of love left out. There is no such thing as courtship; and seldom such a thing as falling in love. A young man's parents, or near relatives, select his wife. Oftentimes a girl or woman sees her husband for the first time when she comes to marry him. Frequently girls and women are selected for wives for no other, or stronger, reason than that they are quiet, shy, extremely industrious and modest. The ability to do things, next to caste, is her highest recommendation. These are the qualities of prime importance in the eyes of the relatives who make the matrimonial matches. The real sentimental love element does not necessarily enter into marriages consummated for such reasons. This may account for the frequent separation of husbands and wives among the Thlingets. Love is lacking to cement the holy bond; hence they separate for the most trivial reasons. Few women there are among them of any age who have not had more than a dozen husbands (so-called); and few

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men who have not had many wives. These matrimonial vicissitudes are doubtless due, at least largely, to the lack of genuine love matches.

But Gissaoosh, when he first looked into the bewitching, coal-black eyes of Kosteen, was smitten with love. She was then eighteen—the period when the Thlinget woman is in full bloom and fades so rapidly afterwards. Kosteen was uncommonly pretty. Her features were well moulded, a rosy tint adorned her olive complexion, and in form she was neither massive nor spindling, but graceful and beautiful. Her hair was her crowning physical beauty; in color raven black. Her carriage was sprightly and graceful; an uncommon characteristic with her people.

It was no wonder, then, that Gissaoosh was smitten with this lovely apparition. Others had been before him. And now this bird in his hand he was loth to let it go. So, in order to save her to himself, he was willing to cut loose from his people and plunge with her into the grim solitude of the forest and share with her any and every privation.

## CHAPTER VI

THAT night, when the inhabitants of Wrangell were wrapped in slumber, the two self-exiles quietly put some of their personal effects into a canoe, scantily provisioned it, and then paddled softly beyond the hearing of that people.

It was some hours after the members of the household, in which Gissaoosh and Kosteel lived, were astir before they were missed. Upon investigation, it was found that they had fled. Soon the whole village knew of their flight. News of a scandalous nature travels fast among such people. Many flocked to the house of Gissaoosh to gossip about the affair and satisfy their curiosity, which is a common practice when anything out of the ordinary occurs.

When those who desired to shed Kosteel's blood heard of it they were chagrined because they had been outwitted. No native relishes to be outwitted. Many of them regard deception as praiseworthy. Those who are successful in deceiving are considered smart. This was especially true when the events herein related took place.



## INDIAN VENGEANCE

Many were sorry that Gissaoosh had left them. He was a popular man with his tribe; not so much for his virtues as for his prowess. His people realized that he was making a sacrifice to live apart from them; so their sympathy went out to him.

Tribes are very clannish. No matter what crime a man commits his tribe will stand by him to a man and save him from punishment if they can. To accomplish this they will pay heavily if required, every member contributing something toward his defense. Or, if justice overtakes the culprit and he is lodged in jail, they pity him, lament his misfortune and labor to have him released. No matter how deserving of punishment he may be, they will save him from it if they can. So the people of Gissaoosh lamented his forced departure.

The exiles traveled till daybreak, and then sought a shelter in the forest. It was nothing to pack their canoe into the bushes where it was hidden so none could see it.

“We will sleep and rest today, Kosteem,” said the man, “and when the stars come out again we’ll continue on our way. I know the spot where we will tarry. It abounds with fish



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and game. There we can live for a long time though we see not the face of man.”

Gissaoosh was right. No man need starve who lives anywhere on the south coast of Alaska. Fresh fish and game are to be had any day in the year. All he needs to do is to follow the Petrine invitation, arise, kill and eat.

“But, Gissaoosh,” replied the woman, “I’m sorry to bring you to this. I wish that you had let them kill me, as I deserve; then you could live with your people.”

“No! No! Kosteén, that would break my heart. To be with you is my happiness. My people are against you; so I do not care for them now. Don’t, then, worry about me. I know they’ll repent and wish me back. But when they know they can’t have me without my Kosteén, they’ll welcome you too for my sake. So don’t trouble your soul about me. We’ll make the forest our home for a season, enjoy its freedom, live on its wild products, and feast on love. What more, Kosteén, can the human heart wish for? Men live in communities, shut themselves up in houses, forge social chains to bind themselves to the slavery of customs, and call it living! and, wildest of all, boast of freedom! How absurd! We live and are free in-

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deed only when we live next to Nature's heart. So I'm happy. A child of Nature, I love the wild. Having you to share this primitive life with me, I'm thrice happy. Therefore, Kosteena, have no vain regrets over me."

"I wish my heart was as true as yours, Gissaoosh. But, alas, it is so fickle. This wind is now from the north, kissing yonder shaded slope; but before night it may be blowing from the south, kissing yonder sunny slope. Such is woman's love, variable as the wind. Keep me in this wilderness apart from others and I am secure. My heart will then cling to you."

"Kosteena, talk no more in this strain. Your heart, I know, is not so base, else you would not talk so. This confession and self-abasement bespeak a nobler nature than you claim for yourself. The mean and base hide their faults and pretend to saintliness. So I trust you."

"But Gissaoosh, I know my heart, and it is as I say. So be undeceived. Did I not leave Hochaga and run with you? If untrue to him can I be true to you? It were better for you if we return to Wrangell and you surrender me to your people. I have caused so much trouble I deserve to die."

The Thlingets as a rule are fearless of death.

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They have been known to frequently present themselves to be killed both for their own crimes and as a substitute for members of their tribe. So Kosteén was not merely indulging in idle talk as she thus spoke to her companion.

“I see,” replied Gissaoosh, “that you hope to discourage me and have me to turn back and deliver you to my people. It will not work, my little fox. Your frankness does not comport with such a nature as you claim you have.”

“For your sake, I wish it were so, Gissaoosh. I wish it were so. But, alas, I cannot trust my own heart.”

As Kosteén said this Gissaoosh looked searchingly into her eyes. His looks betrayed that he partly believed her. No more, however, was said on the subject.

As the sun silently sank below the western horizon, the exiles ate their humble evening meal; and as the stars one after another bejeweled the heaven above, they boarded their little craft and went gliding over the deep, skirting along the shadowy shore.

Before the glint in the east appeared to announce the coming of another day, they had arrived at the spot where Gissaoosh had in mind to stay. It was a very sequestered, charm-

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ing nook, one of the beautiful lagoons so numerous in Alaska. The entrance to it was so narrow that any craft much larger than a canoe could not enter it. Within it was perfectly circular. It was not more than one-half of a mile in diameter, yet very deep. Several varieties of fish inhabited its ever quiet waters. Its shores were fringed with timber and bushes, save one place where there was a meadow of some area. On the marshy surface of this meadow grew the luscious lagoon-berry in great profusion. In the forest the bushes were weighted with huckleberries, salmon-berries, wild currants, and other small fruits. It also abounded with deer, bears, porcupines, groundhog, grouse, and other wild game fit for the table of a king. Starve! Not where Nature is so bountiful as this. No man who has the use of his feet and hands need starve in such a place. Here his table is always spread for him to eat when he is hungry. Starvation is the rarest death in Alaska. A man must be disabled by accident, sickness or infirmity to meet Starvation here unless somewhere lost on the vast plains of the interior. But the coast of Alaska is a vast refectory where man may dine when

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he will. There was, then, no danger of the exiles starving so long as they had health.

When they entered this quiet precinct there was no hint of human life present besides themselves. So they congratulated themselves that they had the place all to themselves. But they had scarcely more than nicely settled themselves in their "sissa-hit" (tent-house), when, looking out, they saw a smoke issuing from the trees near-by and trailing slowly over the lagoon. It both surprised and startled them.

Their first impulse on this discovery was to strike tent at once and leave; but on second thought they determined to ascertain who was their neighbor. Gissaoosh played the spy. He stole through the woods and cautiously approached the locality whence issued the smoke. Much to his surprise, and relief as well, he found an abode which was half house and half tent, the sole occupant of it a white man. After a few interchanges of words, signs and motions with the man, Gissaoosh returned and reported his discovery to Kosteem.

They regarded the white man being there as all right, feeling that he might be of service to them than otherwise.

The newly discovered man, John Heizer, was

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a prospector. He had fixed his habitation with the thought of spending the following winter there. Hence he had made the lower part of logs and boards and the upper, or roof, part of tenting material.

Even in prospector's clothes, Heizer was not a bad-looking man; and if "spruced up" at all he was rather good-looking. He was fairly educated and a man of some breeding. He stood about five feet and ten inches high, and weighed about one hundred and seventy pounds.

He had chosen the life of a solitary prospector after many vicissitudes and some sore disappointments in early life. He was now verging on to forty years of age and possessed a sound constitution. Like most prospectors and men who live in the solitude, he made the pipe and dog his companions.

The latter is the only sentient being whose fidelity can be implicitly relied on. He will stick when all others fail; and in lonely camp-life he proves very companionable indeed. Faithful brute! which deserves man's kindest treatment, too often has his faithfulness rewarded with kicks and blows.

The pipe is a consolation to lonely man. I know some people abhor it, and some are so



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narrow they would even prohibit, if they could, its use. But if a man find a comfort and pleasure in an indulgence that does not interfere with the rights and privileges of others, why should he be deprived of that pleasure? Forsooth! just to accommodate himself to the whimsical conscience of some bigot? The man in solitude will never be the worse being for his dog and pipe.

That afternoon Heizer visited the camp of Gissaoosh. Kosteen, according to the modesty and etiquette of the female portion of her people, turned her face from the visitor (being a man) and busied herself with her sewing — a happy refuge for most native women. Notwithstanding this ruse of Kosteen, Heizer could see that she was uncommonly pretty for an Indian woman. He patiently waited until he could get a square look at her face. Some time elapsed before he succeeded in getting it. Indian wives are not supposed to look at other men. Husbands are jealous of them if they do. Kosteen was aware of this; so she was careful not to incur the displeasure of Gissaoosh, by even glancing at the strange man.

But a circumstance happened that enabled the white man to get a full view of her face.



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His dog, lying near the camp stove, stretched his paw and touched it. He gave a jump and a howl, at the same time creating quite a commotion. As humor is a very pronounced trait of the Thlingets, Kosteene, as well as the others, could not withhold her laughter at the antics of the dog, and while giving vent to her feelings, she looked squarely at the white man. Heizer was more than favorably impressed with her face.

As time slipped away, the campers became better and better acquainted. Kosteene's shyness wore off. She would not only look at her white neighbor, but smile with him when anything was said or done to provoke a smile.

Her race are uncommonly blessed with excellent and handsome teeth. She possessed them as near perfection as they could be. Without ever having felt the pressure of a toothbrush, they were as white as though brushed with finest dentifrice every day. When she smiled her pretty white teeth showed just enough to display their beauty, and it gave her countenance a winsomeness hard for man to resist. The prospector observed this feature of her otherwise prepossessing face.

Day by day she became more and more inter-

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esting to the white man; and he became more and more interesting to her. His looks pleased her. Still she was very careful of her conduct in his presence, as she did not wish to excite the jealousy of her husband (as Gissaoosh was now so regarded). She well knew how girls and women of her race had suffered horrible disfigurements of face and other cruel treatment for exciting the jealousy of their husbands. Nor did it take much to arouse this jealousy. A glance, a word, a mere dream of a wife's inconstancy, a suspicion was sufficient to arouse it. So Kosteën was cautious.

Heizer found a pleasure in visiting his neighbors, and was pleased when they called on him. He was kind to them, giving them of his stores and assisting them in any way he could. He thus ingratiated himself into their good graces and, by his spirit of generosity, made them kindly disposed toward him.

As time wore on, Heizer found himself caring more and more for the woman. On the other hand, the woman was conceiving a liking for him. The former had no other human being on whom to center his affections.

Gissaoosh watched his wife (so regarded) very closely to see if he could detect her show-

## INDIAN VENGEANCE

ing any feeling for the white man. What she had already told him about her fickleness, made him fear that she might take a fancy to this man. He had not the implicit faith in her that he pretended he had. There was a measure of uneasiness in his mind about her. He was shrewd enough to see that Heizer cared for her whether she did for him or not. Not knowing the Indian ways as well as he might, the prospector did things which were construed by his jealous mind as advances toward his wife. With an American woman the same things which the prospector did would have attracted little or no attention of her husband. But the keen, observing mind of the Indian read in them a serious meaning.

Without realizing it, Heizer was treading on very dangerous ground, until one day he committed a very grave indiscretion which fired the jealousy of Gissaoosh.

The latter was out getting wood. He passed by the prospector's camp to get it. The two exchanged a few words and the Indian passed on. While he was returning he saw the white man coming from his camp. His suspicion was at once aroused and the green-eyed monster took complete possession of him.

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Heizer had very injudiciously slipped over to the tent of the woman while Gissaoosh was away. She was aware of the trouble it would make if he were seen by her husband. She indicated for him to leave; but, like a silly man, he loitered until too late, and was consequently seen by the returning Indian.

As soon as Gissaoosh entered the tent, his countenance indicated his displeasure, and he looked reproachfully at Kosteën.

“Was that man calling here?” he demanded.

She frankly answered that he was. It was enough. He burned with jealousy.

“How long was he here?” he next demanded.

She promptly told him.

“Did you talk with him?” he asked in harsh tones.

“No; I had no desire to see him,” she truthfully said.

“Ah, ha!” he scornfully laughed. “I suppose not!” he very sarcastically added, and then roundly abused her.

## CHAPTER VII

FROM the time that Gissaoosh discovered the prospector coming from his camp, he distrusted him and regarded him with suspicion and malice. Jealousy rankled in his bosom. That day, before he let up quizzing his wife, he picked a quarrel with her. And the more she endeavored to show the innocence of the prospector, as well as of herself, the worse it made the jealous man. He thought she was lying to shield herself and Heizer.

What a fierce fire is jealousy! and how rapidly it consumes the nobler principles of the soul! Trust is burned away at once by it, while a fierce hatred is generated by the same heat. Peace is rapidly consumed in its fire, while it leaves the mind in violent unrest.

The faith of Gissaoosh in Kosteën was now shattered. His peace of soul was gone. The camp became an abode of misery. He would have moved from the place, but felt he had a grievance against the prospector he must pay.

As is the manner of his people, he brooded over his trouble until it was magnified a hun-

## INDIAN VENGEANCE

dred-fold in his eyes and made him desperate. He would "do him," he said to himself, and then swipe his belongings. Thus he would rid himself of the man and avenge the offense he had suffered.

No matter how much has been done for a native, as a rule, if you cross him or offend him, he forgets every kindness you have done him and he is ready to turn your implacable enemy.

Kosteen knew this. She also saw the drift of things and feared for the life of the prospector; as she well knew what a demon jealousy is in the bosom of one of her race.

She had seen husbands slash the cheeks of their wives, punch out an eye, knock out the teeth, and bite off the end of the nose from frenzied jealousy. The author has himself seen ugly scars on the faces of women, the marks of jealous rage.

Kosteen had known also life to be taken for no other reason. The demon was now awake in Gissaoosh, and there was no telling what he would do.

Heizer, not knowing how little it takes to arouse the jealousy of an Indian, never dreamed that he was a marked man by Gissaoosh.

## INDIAN VENGEANCE

The demon was also awake in the prospector's bosom, but of another name — the demon of covetousness. He was coveting strongly his neighbor's wife.

Not many days after he had aroused the demon in Gissaoosh, he made another fatal misstep. While visiting his neighbors he pretended to be very much interested in a pair of mocasins which Kosteën was making. While examining and admiring them, he intentionally, though he thought he was not observed, laid his hand on the hand of the woman. Unfortunately, Gissaoosh saw it; and that not accidentally, as he had been very slyly observing every move the prospector made.

This act of the white man only added more fuel to the already hot flame of jealousy.

After he left the tent, Gissaoosh picked another quarrel with Kosteën and abused her roundly. He made his boast that he would "fix" the "white devil."

The woman knew what that meant. She knew also that it was no idle threat on the man's part. So she was thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the white man. She resolved to tell him of his danger and warn him to be on his



## INDIAN VENGEANCE

guard. The native had a double motive for putting Heizer out of the way—to save Kosteén from him and to get his property.

From this on he was churlish and disagreeable. He made life so miserable for the woman she wished herself with the white man, whom she felt would be kind to her.

Before she could contrive to communicate to the man his danger, Gissaoosh had determined his plan of attack.

He had seen some deer on the opposite side of the lagoon the very day that Heizer had so foolishly laid his hand on the hand of Kosteén. He planned to invite his neighbor to get into his canoe, cross the lagoon and capture some of the deer. While crossing the lagoon he would shoot the man and tumble his body into the water. This, he thought, would dispose of Heizer very effectually and leave no traces of the murder. He had no fears of managing Kosteén in the matter.

Accordingly, before the woman could acquaint the prospector with his danger, her husband had invited him to go after deer, which invitation was gladly accepted.

When they were about two-thirds of the way

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across the lagoon, what was Heizer's consternation to see the Indian suddenly drop his paddle, grasp his rifle and attempt to level it at him. Instinctively he took in the situation, instantly grabbed the side of the canoe and gave her such a lurch as to throw Gissaoosh, causing him to fall awkwardly on his side. Before the desperate man could adjust himself, the prospector was grappling with him for the gun. In the scuffling they capsized the canoe and both were dumped into the deep. Here the prospector had the advantage, as he was a good swimmer, whereas the Indian could not swim at all. The efforts of the latter to get on the canoe proved fruitless, and he finally sank out of sight.

This left Heizer in absolute control of the situation. After climbing on to the upturned canoe, he grabbed a paddle floating near-by and paddled to the nearest shore. Then, dumping the water out of the canoe, he paddled back to camp.

Heizer made no attempt to rescue the body of the Indian, as he was smarting under his assault and felt that the drowned man received what he deserved.

As soon as he could exchange dry clothes for

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his wet ones, he went to the camp of Kosteel and acquainted her with the dreadful facts. The poor woman was overcome with grief and piteously bewailed the death of Gissaoosh. The prospector pitied her from the bottom of his heart. A long time followed before she sufficiently composed herself for him to reason with her.

He was afraid that she would resent every proffer of help after what had taken place; that she would harbor enmity toward him for his part in the death of her companion. But the truth is the woman felt relieved that Gissaoosh was out of the way; for lately he had made life intolerable for her. She cared, too, for the prospector. Furthermore, she felt herself to be entirely at his mercy. For these reasons she yielded more readily to his proposals than he had anticipated.

He conveyed to her as best he could that he wanted her to come and share his camp. This she did, as the bewildered woman saw nothing else for her to do.

The next day they dragged the lagoon with fish-lines until they recovered the body of Gissaoosh. Heizer made as good a coffin as he could with the rude materials at hand, and the

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twain, there in the solitary forest, gave him the best burial they could under the circumstances. There his body lay until his tribe discovered where it was and, with great lamentations, conveyed it to Wrangell.

## CHAPTER VIII

NEARLY a year had rolled away before the people of Gissaoosh discovered that he was dead. It was a sorry discovery for them. Especially did they regret that he had met his death by drowning. The tribe regarded this as very unfortunate, as death by drowning was considered very ignominious. Slaves were not accorded the ceremony of burning when dead, but their lifeless bodies were cast into the sea. This was done as a mark of contempt.

For a man of caste, then, like Gissaoosh, to meet his death by drowning, was a most deplorable affair. They doubly mourned his death for this.

In the spirit world, according to their superstition, his spirit would have to remain in a cold, disagreeable place. Had his body been burned according to their custom, then in the other world his spirit would have been assured a warm and comfortable place. Hence the custom of burning their dead. Before the advent of the missionary to enlighten them, the

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native's idea of future misery was not suffering from heat but from cold.

When they dug up the remains of Gissaoosh and transferred them to Wrangell, they burned his bones, hoping that this act would procure for his spirit in the other world a more comfortable place than he otherwise would have. A big feast for the dead was given immediately after, as a further propitiation to the unseen powers in behalf of the spirit of the drowned man. Feasting for the benefit of the dead is a common practice which obtains to the present day. During the feast food is thrown into the fire. This, it is imagined, is in some way beneficial to the dead. So when the sad rites of burning the bones of the man long dead were over, the feasting as a matter of custom followed.

Yet after the people of Gissaoosh had done this they did not feel that their whole duty toward the dead had been discharged. The death of their tribesman remained to be avenged. As Gissaoosh stood high in his tribe, no ordinary man from the tribe of Kosteek could be taken. They must take one equally high in station as he and kill Kosteek also if

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they could do so. For she, they reasoned, was the direct cause of all their troubles.

There are some queer principles in the jurisprudence (if we may so call their system of civil proceedings) of the natives. If, for instance, a high caste individual is killed by one of low caste, not the murderer is taken, but one of his tribe who is equal in caste to the one killed. If such cannot be found then two of the lower caste must pay the penalty of the man's deed. Owing to this system the innocent has more often suffered the penalty of crimes than the guilty. So, in conformity to this custom, the tribe of Gissaoosh determined to seize and kill some member of Kosteens's tribe who was the peer of their dead one.

Kosteens, knowing the ways of her race, knew that she was a marked woman, and told her newly adopted spouse so.

"Gissaoosh—his people," she said, "me kill. Go away, me all right. Me—go—you—white man's—home."

These incoherent words were plainly understood by the prospector, and he realized that her fears were well founded. He determined to act on her suggestion and leave the dangerous place. Besides, visions of the dead Gissaoosh



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haunted him, and would, he felt, so long as he remained there. Every day he could see the spot where the struggling man went under. The agony depicted on his drowning countenance would ever remain imprinted on his memory. Then, there was the place of his burial near-by. He could fancy at times that the dead Indian, in spirit, was walking around, watching his familiarities with his wife. The thought that he, at least in measure, was guilty of his death preyed on his mind. Heizer was indeed ill at ease and very restive. His conscience bitterly incriminated him. Not so much for the Indian's death, as for taking his wife.

He resolved to leave the hateful place, and now wondered at himself that he had stayed there so long as he had. Then, too, he had become quite attached to the woman, and she to him. He would leave to save her, he said to himself, as well as to get away from a place with such unpleasant associations.

He purposed to go to British Columbia as a refuge, and there escape entirely the enemies of Kosteén.

The very day that they left the lagoon they had not traveled more than four miles when they saw rounding a point at the north a string

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of three canoes. They watched them intently and saw them enter the lagoon they had just left. They felt reasonably sure that the people in the canoes were the people of Gissaoosh bent on revenge. It was true; and how fortunate for them they had pulled away from the place in time!

The people who were seeking revenge were deeply disappointed when they found no one in the lagoon. Their experienced eyes told them that it had not been long vacated. Had they seen the boat of the prospector before they entered the lagoon, they probably would have pursued him. But as they did not see the boat they were not inclined to set up a "wild goose chase," and blindly run after a man they knew not where.

Failing in this murderous enterprise they resolved to return to Wrangell; which they did. Then they marked the man in Kosteens's tribe whom they would kill in revenge of the death of Gissaoosh.

According to native custom, negotiations with the woman's tribe were entered into for the deliverance of the man. They were told how Gissaoosh had come to his death, and that Kosteens, one of their tribe, was the cause of it;

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that, according to their custom, a life had to be given for a life, and one equally high caste as the one taken.

The Kokwontons scorned their demand, and warned them not to harm a member of their tribe, or they would rue it.

A grudge is not easily or soon forgotten by this people. The Wrangellites were not likely to forget their grievance against the Kokwontons; nor did they. The marked men fell in due time. And so the feud continues. What an apparently insignificant thing set it in motion? And where will it end?

When the prospector saw the fleet of canoes enter the lagoon, he drew his inference, and a correct one. Knowing the pursuers would find the camp vacant, and fearing, when they did, they might continue their search in his direction, he pulled as strongly as he could to make the best possible time.

Deer and various kind of wild fowl were seen within range of his gun as they moved along, yet he had no disposition to take time to fire at them. His chief concern was to get on. He was fleeing for a place of refuge from the avengers of blood. Not until darkness began to brood over the land did he cease from driv-

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ing his boat along. As it was the season when the daylight is loth to disappear from the Alaskan landscape, he had a good long day's pull.

His companion was no stranger to the oars. She assisted, therefore, and rendered very valuable service. The two of them sent the little craft along at a good speed; so that by nightfall they were well on their way.

Kosteen was developing true affection for Heizer, as he treated her kindly and gave her many tokens of regard. These appealed to her, won her confidence and what affection she bestowed upon him. She now felt that her life was bound up in his. She felt that she had alienated herself from her own people, and Gissaoosh being dead she had no one else but this man to cling to. She liked him and she felt a certain sense of security in his companionship.

So while she missed Gissaoosh and regretted his death, still she was contented with her lot, being satisfied that the course of things had shapened to her advantage. For she was very sensibly aware of the fact that Heizer was a much better provider than the man with whom she formerly lived.

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Poor woman! Little did she know what a terrible fate awaited her!

Things went well until the third day after they had broken from the lagoon. That night, shortly before they were ready to retire, Heizer's actions became very strange. He had been very morose through the entire evening, a phase of character unusual with him. But very quickly he developed the character of a wild, murderous maniac. Looking at the unprotected woman with the diabolical look of a full-fledged maniac, uttering an imprecation that made her blood run cold, he seized her by the throat, signifying his intention to strangle her. She struggled to free herself from his deadly grip, but in vain. The more she struggled the harder he gripped, until she fell a victim to his mad frenzy. Having committed this ghastly deed, he saturated her clothing, the bedding, and other inflammable material, with coal oil. He then bound himself with a strong cord to his dead companion, taking care before he did so to place matches where he could reach them. Having prepared this gruesome death-trap for himself, he evidently intended to perish in it. But Providence saved him from such a miserable end. Just before he was ready to apply

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the match, he was discovered by parties who were passing by. Being tied when they appeared at the camp, they had no difficulty in seizing him. He was conveyed to an asylum below where he soon died after entering it.

A long time has elapsed since this awful tragedy occurred, and yet the spot where it occurred is to this day eschewed by travelers, especially by Indians, who are largely swayed by superstition.

There is a story prevalent with the natives of the country that every night the sad wail of a woman is heard at this spot and that travelers have seen an apparition there. Whether these things be true or not, the place is scrupulously avoided by those who know of the tragedy.

Whether Heizer's insanity was engendered by his brooding over his complicity in the death of Gissaoosh; or through fear that he would be captured; or by the thought of his self-degradation, we can only conjecture. But it is difficult to conceive of a more disastrous train of evils as a consequence of the folly of one man and woman.

END





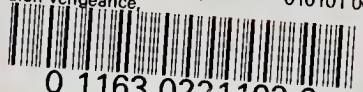
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